

Rivers

Patapsco River

The Patapsco River was first explored by Captain John Smith in the spring of 1608 and was originally named Bolus Flu. The name was eventually changed to an Indian derivative, Patapsco. The river system is approximately fifty two miles in length and covers an estimated 540 square miles of watershed drainage area. There are two distinct components of the riversystem: the tidewater basin, otherwise known as the harbor basin, and the Main Branch. The harbor basin has water depths of up to fifty feet while the Main Branch is both shallow in depth and narrow in width. At the point where the Patapsco River meets the Chesapeake Bay, the river reaches its greatest width of approximately four miles.

The Patapsco River's South Branch starts at a small pond, "Parr's Spring", located on the border between Howard County and Carroll County. The North Branch begins at the Liberty Reservoir Dam in Carroll County. The South Branch and the North Branch join up at a point located downstream from Marriottsville, near the McKeldin Recreation Area in Patapsco Valley State Park. The South Branch is approximately 19 miles long, but the North Branch is only 4 miles in length. The tidewater limit of the Patapsco extends only a few miles upstream from the Middle Branch at the harbor basin but is officially recognized as being located at the Thomas Railroad Viaduct located in Patapsco Valley State Park.

Valued as an important provider of energy for commerce in the 19th century, the Patapsco today is appreciated for its beauty and recreational offerings which include a variety of fishing opportunities for anglers.

Courtesy of Patapsco Valley State Park and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources

**Did You Know?**  
If you find a sick, injured or orphaned bird or small mammal, you may call "All Creatures Great & Small" at 410 740-5996 in Columbia. (8 AM to 7 PM, seven days a week).

Species Checklist  
How many can you find?

**Birds**

- Canada Goose
- Wood Duck
- American Black Duck
- Mallard
- Canvasback
- Ring-necked Duck
- Lesser Scaup
- Bufflehead
- Hooded Merganser
- Common Merganser
- Ruddy Duck
- Common Loon
- Pied-billed Grebe
- Double-crested Cormorant
- Great Blue Heron
- Great Egret
- Green Heron
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Osprey
- Bald Eagle
- Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Cooper's Hawk
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- American Kestrel
- American Coot
- Killdeer
- Spotted Sandpiper
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- American Woodcock
- Ring-billed Gull
- Rock Pigeon
- Mourning Dove
- Cuckoo
- Eastern Screech-Owl
- Great Horned Owl
- Barred Owl
- Chimney Swift
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Belted Kingfisher
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Eastern Wood-Pewee
- Acadian Starling
- Eastern Phoebe
- Great Crested Flycatcher
- Eastern Kingbird
- White-eyed Vireo
- Yellow-throated Vireo
- Red-eyed Vireo
- Blue Jay
- American Crow
- Fish Crow
- Purple Martin
- Tree Swallow
- N. Rough-winged Swallow
- Cliff Swallow
- Barn Swallow
- Carolina Chickadee
- Tufted Titmouse
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Brown Creeper
- Carolina Wren
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- Eastern Bluebird
- Wood Thrush
- American Robin
- Gray Catbird
- Northern Mockingbird
- Brown Thrasher
- Wood-Pewee
- Cedar Waxwing
- Blue-winged Warbler
- Northern Parula
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- Orchard Oriole
- Baltimore Oriole
- House Finch
- American Goldfinch
- House Sparrow

Little Patuxent River

Captain John Smith discovered the Little Patuxent River. Smith, named the river after a large tribe of Indians living along its banks in southern Maryland, who called themselves the Patuxents. The Little Patuxent is the largest tributary of the Patuxent River, and is one of three main river drainages from central Maryland to the Chesapeake Bay. The Patuxent is the longest river to be located entirely within the state of Maryland. It borders six counties, including Howard County, where it forms the southwestern border with Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

The Little Patuxent River, the Middle Patuxent River and the West-ern Branch are the three largest tributaries of the Patuxent River. The Middle Patuxent flows into the Little Patuxent just upstream from the historic Savage Mill. The Little Patuxent then joins the Patuxent just northeast of Bowie, Maryland. The Western Branch joins the Patuxent at Upper Marlboro, the county seat of Prince George's County.

The Little Patuxent River begins in Howard County at Alpha Ridge. It flows approximately 25 miles through Howard County, and another 20 miles through Anne Arundel County before joining the Patuxent River. The Little Patuxent's watershed covers 103 square miles, including 52 square miles in Howard County. It flows through the town of Columbia, and collects outfall water from Centennial Lake, Wilde Lake, Lake Kittamaqundi and Lake Elkhorn.

Although the Little Patuxent River was valued as an important provider of energy for commerce in the 19th century, now it is valued for its scenic and recreational opportunities, as well as for providing a habitat for fish and wildlife.

Courtesy of Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks

**Bollman Truss Bridge**

Photo Courtesy of Ken Losurdo, Losurdo Photography www.losurdophotography.com

Heritage

Schooley Mill Park

Wildlife Driving Tour Stop Number 4

Marlow House

Built prior to the Civil War and is an example of a typical farmhouse that was once commonly found in the rural areas of Howard County. It is named after James Marlow, a local farmer who operated the farm in the late nineteenth century and built the addition for his growing family. He donated an acre of his property to the Howard County School Commission for the building of a schoolhouse. Later, the teacher lived in the Marlow House. Her daughter, Elaine Lynn of Elkridge, recalled growing up in the house in the 1920's when the basement was used to store potatoes that her father grew on the farm. She visited the house after the Department of Recreation and Parks restored it in 1991, and it brought back many fond memories for her.

Courtesy of Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks

Savage Park, Savage Mill Trail

Wildlife Driving Tour Stop Number 7

Bollman Truss Bridge

Is the sole surviving bridge of its type in the world. It was invented by a Baltimore engineer, Wendell Bollman (1814-1884) and was the first all-iron bridge to be used extensively by the railroads. This bridge was originally built in 1852 and used at an unknown location in Maryland. Then it was moved to Savage in 1888, to serve the Savage Mills, which were shipping large quantities of manufactured cotton duck material that was used for sails for clipper ships as well as for the covers of covered wagons. The bridge was named a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1996 by the American Society of Engineers. In September 2000 the bridge was dedicated as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service. It was restored by the Department of Recreation and Parks and is now used as a pedestrian bridge connecting the Savage Historic Mill with the Mill Trail along the Little Patuxent River.

Courtesy of Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks

**Did you know**  
You can report hazardous material or oil spills (24 hours) by calling Maryland Department of the Environment at 1 866-633-4686.

Rockburn Branch Park

Wildlife Driving Tour Stop Number 11

Pfeiffer's Corner School House

Originally constructed about 1883; the Pfeiffer's Corner Schoolhouse is one of very few remaining one-room schools in Howard County. Restoration structure is now complete in its new location within Rockburn Branch Park. Children were educated within its walls for over 50 years until it was converted into a residence in the 1940's. It was almost demolished when new homes were built on the property in the 1980's, but was saved through the efforts of local schoolchildren. They raised funds to have it moved in 1988 to county-owned parkland along route 108 near Clarksville, where it stood for several years until a permanent location could be found. In 2003, it was moved to Rockburn Branch Park where it will illustrate the changes a 100-year time span have brought to our schools, serve as an historic exhibit in conjunction with the adjacent Clover Hill restoration, and be used for demonstration classes, interpretive tours and small meetings.

Courtesy of Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks

The Howard County Conservancy

Wildlife Driving Tour Stop Number 16

Mt. Pleasant

In 1692, Thomas Browne, a Patuxent Ranger, was commissioned to survey the headwaters of the Patuxent and to keep watch on the Indians in Woodstock. He received Ranter's Ridge as a land grant and built a log cabin on a pleasant knoll overlooking two streams. This farm, which became known as Mt. Pleasant, remained in the Brown family for eight generations. Approximately 50 mature hardwoods, gardens, farm, fields, and streams, frame the historic house. Nine historic outbuildings – the carriage house, blacksmith shop, bank barn, wagon shed, corn crib, smokehouse, two hen houses, and more – surround the house as well.

Montjoy Barn

Dating from the 1700's, this barn was located on an 85-acre property in Elliott City that was slated for development. Through the efforts of a number of partners and donors, the barn has been relocated to Mount Pleasant and is now being incorporated into the conservancy's educational programs, and will serve as a monument to the agricultural history of Maryland and the incredible craftsmanship of its builder.

Courtesy of Howard County Conservancy

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Patapsco Valley State Park

Wildlife Driving Tour Stop Number 17

Bloed's Dam

Is believed to be the world's first submerged electrical generating plant that was housed under water inside the shell of a dam. Victor G. Bloede, the same chemist and entrepreneur who created the Water Works at Avalon, hired electrical engineer Otto Wonder to oversee the development of this unique hydroelectric dam that is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. To access: continue on the Park Road, pass the Orange Grove Shelter, and go up river one mile to Bloed's Dam.

The Swinging Bridge

Spans the Patapsco at Orange Grove, 1.6 miles northwest of Avalon following the Park Road in Howard County beyond shelters 104 and 105. Prior suspension foot bridges at this location enabled residents of the Orange Grove mill town to cross the river to Baltimore County to work in the five stories high Orange Grove Flower Mill of the C.A. Gambrell Manufacturing Company. This mill burned May 1, 1905. Cross the bridge to discover ruins of this large mill site that extended from the railroad tracks to the Swinging Bridge abutment. Orange Grove flour was sold in white bags whose tops were string tied and whose labels proclaimed "Patapsco Superlative Flour."

Courtesy of Patapsco Valley State Park and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources

**Patapsco Valley State Park  
Cascade Falls, Orange Grove Area**

Photo Courtesy of Ken Losurdo, Losurdo Photography www.losurdophotography.com

American Gold Finch



**The Official Bird of Howard County** - "Howie" can be spotted in Howard County's, lovely parks, fun farms and at many other outdoor attractions

Photo Courtesy of Ken Losurdo, Losurdo Photography www.losurdophotography.com

Distances to Howard County

Baltimore, MD ...10 miles  
Frederick, MD ...34 miles  
Washington, DC ...24 miles  
Annapolis, MD ...36 miles  
Philadelphia, PA ...84 miles  
Richmond, VA ...136 miles  
New York City, NY ...208 miles

FOR MORE ECOTOURISM INFORMATION ON HOWARD COUNTY:

**Howard County Tourism, Inc.**  
www.visithowardcounty.com  
1-800-288-8747

**Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks**  
www.howardcountymd.gov/rp  
410-313-4700

**Columbia Association**  
www.columbiassociation.com  
410-715-3000

**Frogwatch USA**  
www.nwf.org/frogwatch/USA/

**Howard County Bird Club**  
www.howardbirds.org

**Howard County Conservancy**  
www.hccconservancy.org  
410-465-8877

**Howard Transit**  
www.howardtransit.com  
1-800-270-9553

**Patapsco Valley State Park Maryland Department of Natural Resources**  
www.dnr.maryland.gov  
410-461-5005

**Washington Area Butterfly Club**  
<http://users.sitestar.net/butterfly/>

**Washington Suburban Sanitation Commission**  
www.wsscwater.com  
301-774-9124

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide has been designed to assist in finding local avian and wildlife hotspots while enhancing area wildlife and natural habitat awareness. Each location on the tour features specific species that are likely to be spotted at that location. The checklists on local bird, butterfly, dragonfly & damselfly, frog & toad and turtle species included in this guide are intended to assist in tracking species sightings. Additionally, several of the locations offer historical and natural interpretational exhibits and programs.

This tour can easily be driven all in one day, a couple of days, split up over four seasons, or used in whichever matter works best for the viewer. Recreational activities such as picnicking, hiking, biking, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, horseback riding and more are available throughout the area.

Charming destinations such as Historic Savage Mill, Historic Elliott City and Down Town Columbia are conveniently located and offer amenities such as shopping, dining, performing arts, museums and overnight accommodations.

For a complete guide on what to see and do in Howard County please visit [www.visithowardcounty.com](http://www.visithowardcounty.com) or call the Howard County Tourism Council at: 1-800-288-8747

**Keep it Clean, Go Green - Tips on Caring for the Environment**

- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites during hikes
- Use re-usable picnic supplies versus disposable
- Repackage food to minimize waste
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species in parks and woodlands
- Plant native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers near streams to act as buffers
- Use fertilizer sparingly or not at all
- Car pool or take public transportation: [www.howardtransit.com](http://www.howardtransit.com)
- Recycle: Howard County Curbside Recycling: [www.howardcountymd.gov](http://www.howardcountymd.gov)
- Participate in stream clean ups and work days: [www.howardcountymd.gov/rp](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/rp), [www.patapscoheritagegreenway.org](http://www.patapscoheritagegreenway.org), [www.dnr.state.md.us](http://www.dnr.state.md.us)
- Support "Green" destinations
  - Howard County Conservancy: [www.hccconservancy.org](http://www.hccconservancy.org)
  - Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks: [www.howardcountymd.gov/rp](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/rp)
- Support farms by visiting, buying local produce or making contributions:
  - Local Farms, 410-313-6500
  - Farmers Markets, <http://www.hccda.org/agriculture>

*Information compiled by Lori Paddy*

SPECIAL THANKS:

Columbia Association  
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Frogwatch USA  
Historic Savage Mill  
Howard County Bird Club  
Howard County Conservancy  
Howard County Government  
Howard Transit  
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**The Business Monthly**  
410-740-7300  
10632 Little Patuxent Parkway  
Columbia MD 21061  
[www.bizmonthly.com](http://www.bizmonthly.com)

**Howard County Wildlife Driving Tour**

Howard County  
Recreation & Parks  
WELCOME

WELCOME to Howard County, Maryland

Conveniently located between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Howard County, Maryland, is full of forests, meadows, rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands that are home to hundreds of exciting wildlife species. Whether you call Howard County home or are a much welcomed visitor, the Howard County Wildlife Driving Tour was developed by the Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks, the Howard County Tourism Council and many other partnering organizations and agencies — all with the same goal of bringing you closer to Howard County's natural environment.

WHERE TO START

Get ready to discover local wildlife in its diverse Howard County habitats. Enjoy your journey all in one day or over a range of days, weeks or even all four seasons as each season offers peak viewing times. Begin or end wherever you like; it is not necessary to follow the tour in any specific order. This map will navigate you to:

- The Howard County Department of Recreation & Park's award winning, mixed use facilities
- Patapsco Valley State Park's 14,000 acres of forest and meadows
- The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission's (WSSC) Brighton Dam waterfowl viewing area
- Howard County Conservancy's two hundred and thirty-two acres of rolling hills
- The Columbia Association's ninety miles of path ways and lovely lakes

All are among the many eco-tourism attractions that await in Howard County and are home to hundreds of wildlife species including birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects and mammals. Each point on the tour highlights specific species that are likely to be spotted at that location during a suggested peak viewing season. Additionally, several locations also offer historical and natural interpretational exhibits and programs.

NATURE'S SECRET PLACES WAIT TO BE DISCOVERED

Human sounds are muffled in the depths of Howard County's natural environment. Surrounded by many varieties of flora and fauna, it may seem quiet — but it isn't really. Leaves rustle in the autumn wind, tree limbs creak in the pristine quiet of winter, streams rush after a heavy spring rain and fish and wildlife break the surface of ponds on a still summer afternoon.

No matter the season, be prepared to discover the joys of nature in Howard County, Maryland. The following is but a sampling of the wide variety of wildlife you can expect to see throughout the four seasons.

Fall is not only peak viewing time for a brilliant display of foliage, it is also an ideal time for spotting butterfly and moth species at Poplar Springs Park, various duck species at Centennial Park and several hawk species at Meadowbrook Park. In the quiet of winter, you may notice a bald eagle soaring in the sky or perched high in the treetops at Brighton Dam. A vibrant spring season offers up peak viewing opportunities for woodland birds at Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, shorebirds at Western Regional Park and chorusing frogs at Font Hill Park and along Patuxent Branch Trail. Summertime is ideal to watch for butterflies, damselflies and dragonflies along the Savage Mill Trail or at Lake Elkhorn, turtles at Warfield Pond Park and cavity nesting birds at Schooley Mill Park. Foxes, coyotes, deer and squirrels are seen year round at Rockburn Branch Park, Howard County Conservancy and Patapsco Valley State Park.

HELPFUL HINTS for viewing wildlife  
Reprinted from Howard Magazine, based on information provided by the Howard County Conservancy

- Stay on trails.
- Wear long pants, sunscreen and a hat.
- Wear mosquito repellent, especially for early morning or evening walks.
- Bring water and snacks for longer hikes.
- Dress for weather and other conditions, e.g., steep or muddy trails.
- Know the season and the look of poison ivy to avoid it.
- Move calmly and quietly to disturb wildlife as little as possible.
- Binoculars and a magnifying glass get you closer.
- Bring a camera or journal to record memories.
- Don't pick flowers or berries.
- Do not try to touch, feed or corner wildlife.
- Leave only footprints.
- After your hike, check your clothing for "hitchhikers" like ticks and other insects.
- Wash your hands.